

Newspaper	NEW STRAITS TIMES
Date	11 JULY 2016

# Pak Lah's Waterfall in dire straits

NST- 11/7/2016

## POOR UPKEEP:

The once pristine waterfall is now an eyesore

GEORGE TOWN

**A**IR Terjun Bayan Lepas in Kampung Masjid, or commonly known by the locals as "Air Terjun Pak Lah" (Pak Lah's Waterfall), was a favourite spot for picnics many years ago.

Former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi used to swim there during his childhood, but now the area is dirty with rubbish strewn all over the place.

According to residents, about eight years ago when Abdullah was still the prime minister, the water was crystal clear and many visitors would picnic and swim at the waterfall.

Mohamad Ishak Ismail, 58, who has been living in the area for the past 35 years, said that no effort was made to conserve the waterfall even though it was one of the few left in the state.

"It is sad to see the waterfall in this condition. No one cares about it. The place used to be very beautiful. Families came to spend time together. The water used to flow freely."

Ishak said the environment of the waterfall changed drastically when the land there was privatised. The water became murky after development affected the water source.

"How can such a development be approved when it is located next to a water source?"

Checks showed that there are several highrise projects taking place next to the waterfall. The projects have been approved by the Penang Island City Council.

The council and state Department of Irrigation and Drainage promised to monitor the area and carry out beautification works following a landslide in 2013.

However, efforts were futile and the site is now filled with rubbish. Facilities built there have been left abandoned.

Not only is the waterfall a dumpsite, locals are worried as the area has been invaded by immigrants. It is also a drug haunt for addicts as the place is quite isolated.

Siti Salimah Kassim, 44, said residents nowadays dared not go to the waterfall because they felt threatened by the huge presence of foreign immigrants near the waterfall.

"We have no idea if they are in the country legally or not as we sometimes see them carrying their children and babies. All we know is that they could be construction workers," she said.

Salimah feared the area had turned into a drug haunt for glue sniffers.

"My son once told me that he saw several tins of glue lying around at the summit of the waterfall. I have forbidden him from going there as I feared for his safety."

"I wish the local council and other authorities would do something before any untoward incidents occur," she said.

The sole unspoiled waterfall in the state is the Botanical Gardens, while others have either dried up or become polluted.

Bernama



Locals are worried the place is also a haunt for drug addicts. Bernama pix

